

# Cottontail Rabbit Status Report, 2013

## Agriculture and Grassland Wildlife Program Note 13-1

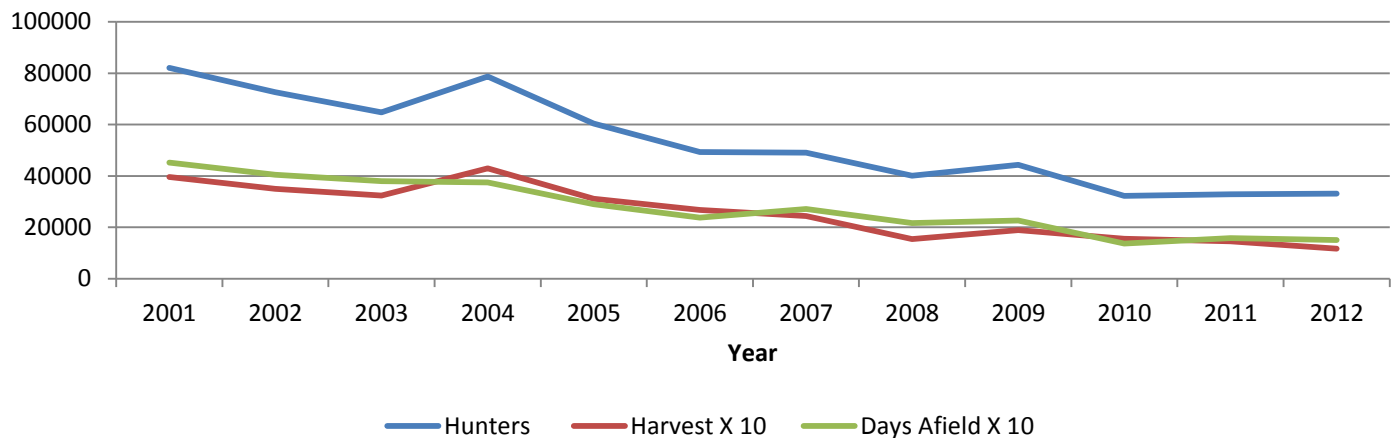


photo by Adele Hodde

### 2012-13 Hunter Harvest

These harvest estimates are based upon results from the 2012-13 Illinois Hunter Harvest Survey. An estimated 33,093 hunters (up 2.6%) harvested 116,552 rabbits (down 25.2%). Rabbit hunters averaged 0.77 rabbits per trip (down 31.9%) in the 2012-13 hunting season.

### Cottontail Rabbit Harvest and Hunter Effort 2001 - 2012



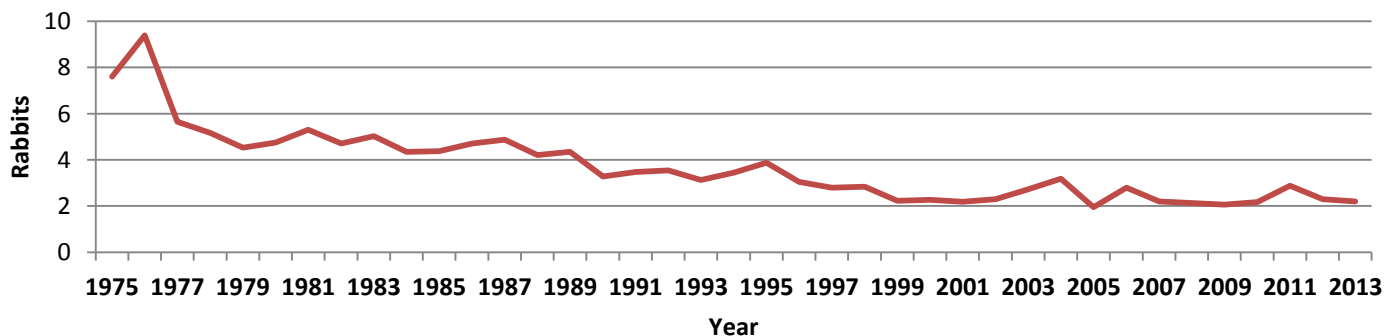
### Rabbit Population Index

The method that provides the most reliable rabbit trend data for Illinois is the road-kill index. The road-kill index is calculated by tracking the number of road-killed rabbits counted in June and July per thousand miles traveled by observers. This index has been recorded and tracked since 1975.

This year's road-kill index was 2.2 rabbits per 1000 miles travelled. The difference between this year's and last year's rabbit indices (down 4.3%) was not statistically significant. Although rabbit numbers have generally been increasing in northern Illinois, more rabbits were still counted in southern Illinois.

### Cottontail Rabbit Road-kill Indices 1975-2013

(Rabbits counted per 1000 miles travelled)





## **Weather 2012-13**

Last year's drought and relatively mild winter (except for the severe weather in March) contrasted with a wet and cool spring in 2013. Spring brought above average rainfall and record flooding on parts of the Illinois River and near record flooding on parts the Mississippi River. Below average temperatures continued into mid-summer until early August. The second half of August and September were very hot and dry with very little precipitation across most of Illinois. Above average temperatures and below-normal precipitation continue as fall approaches.

## **2013-14 Season Outlook**

Rabbit numbers should be about the same as last year's levels, but the good news is that season dates have been extended until February 15! We hope this allows a few more trips into the field and maybe a chance to introduce a kid or acquaintance to rabbit hunting.

Crop harvest appears to be behind schedule in much of the state this year. Weather permitting, most of crops should be out of the fields by the beginning of rabbit season in most of the state.

## **Best Areas**

Look for farms with a mix of row crops, small grain and legumes with shrubby fencerows, old pasture and forest edges. The most productive areas for rabbit hunting continue to be in west-central and southern Illinois. Based on the average annual harvest estimates from 1997 through 2012, some of the top counties are: Bond, Calhoun, Clay, Clinton, Madison, Marion and Wayne

## **Season Dates**

November 2, 2013 – February 15, 2014 (Statewide)

## **Hours**

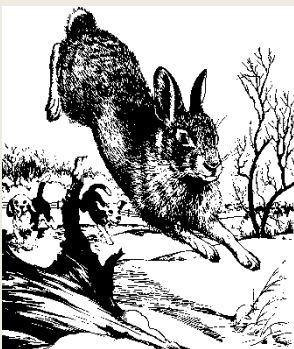
Sunrise to Sunset

## **Bag Limits**

4 per day with 10 in possession after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day



photo by Adele Hodde



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